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Chronology of U Thant Suggestion that DRV and U.S. Representatives Meet in Rangoon to Discuss Restoration of Peace in Viet-Nam

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Authority State ltr. 2-2-76
By Chw, NARS, Date 1-2-76

v. 1963 – Aug.64 "Several proposals" on Viet-Nam were advanced by SYG to Stevenson and reported to Dept., but were not deemed feasible (Stevenson note Feb. 16/65). One (Nov./63) was to encourage formation broad-based SVN Govt, including exiles in Paris. Dept. did not reply (U Thant-Yost talk, Feb. 25/65).

ily 1964 SYG visited Burma. He found Ne Win negative on idea of taking soundings with Hanoi (USUN records of Aug./64 conversations in Washington). SYG later denied raising subject of meeting in Rangoon at that time (Yost-SYG memcon Nov. 19/65).

ug. 6 1964 SYG visited Washington and presented "proposals" at luncheon given by Sec. Rusk at State Dept. (Stevenson note Feb. 16/65). Also talked with Stevenson (Plimpton-SYG memcon Feb. 13/65).

SYG talked (at lunch?) with President alone (no record). At "larger" meeting (McG. Bundy present) SYG raised idea of "pursuing private probe" with Ho, mentioning Pakistan, Burma and Cambodia as possible

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intermediaries. Bundy told SYG that "signal" through Pakistan to Peking had met blank wall. In subsequent (?) talk with Sec. Rusk, SYG reiterated "probe" idea and referred to Ne Win's lack of interest, (USUN records of Washington conversations August/64).

From meeting with Sec. Rusk, SYG got impression Washington generally receptive, though no definite assurances given (Ball-U Thant memcon Dec. 7/65).

Mid-Aug. 1964 U Thant asked Ho Chi Minh (through Soviets) whether Ho would send a representative to negotiate directly and privately with a U.S. emissary at some unspecified place. (Yost-SYG conversation Feb. 25/65)

Sept. 1964

U Thant asserts he immediately passed the information to Stevenson and asked him to ascertain Washington's reaction. (Yost-SYG memcon Nov. 19/65) Thereafter he

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saw Stevenson at least once every week but Stevenson could say nothing except that he had no reply from Washington. (Ball-U Thant memcon Dec. 7/65)

Stevenson, however, told Cleveland that he had first been informed in late November of U Thant's contact with Hanoi and Hanoi's affirmative response. Stevenson said that Thant told him he had not wanted to talk to him about his initiative before the election but that he (Thant) had gone ahead and gotten an affirmative signal through the USSR. (Stevenson-Cleveland Telcon, Feb. 13/65)

From other information on Stevenson-SYG November talks (Plimpton-SYG memcon Feb. 13/65; Yost-SYG memcons Feb. 25/65 and Nov. 19/65; telcons et al cited below) it is possible that SYG's November "initiative" may have related to Rangoon as venue of talks, not to Hanoi's willingness to hold them.

Stevenson's note of Feb. 16/65, states SYG informed him in December of sounding Hanoi through Soviets, of Hanoi's willingness to talk, and of Ne Win's offer of Rangoon as venue. This does not square with above or with Rusk-Stevenson telcons cited below, except insofar as continuing discussion of Rangoon as site may be concerned.

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Note, however, that U Thant's ~~latest~~ account (Ball-U Thant memcon Dec. 7/65) indicates overture to Ne Win was made promptly after Jan. 11 or 12 talk with Stevenson, and favorable reply re Rangoon received Jan. 16/65 (Ball-U Thant memcon Dec. 7/65).

Nov.23,1964 Reference to "guarded talk" on subject between Rusk and Stevenson (possibly Rusk's first knowledge of Thant's initiative). (Rusk-Stevenson Telcon, Nov. 24/64 - 9:50 am)

Nov.24,1964 Rusk said we need to know U Thant's thinking and what reaction he has had. Also, some discussion of possible neutral countries or curtain countries being available as venues. (Rusk-Stevenson Telcon, Nov.24/64 - 9:50 am) Later on same day, Stevenson said response

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was "very affirmative" re opening line of communication, and that he (Thant) got this word from the Russians. (Rusk-Stevenson Telcon, Nov. 24/64 - 5:45 pm)

Nov.26,1964 Stevenson said he had talked with U Thant again. U Thant said the Soviets were no longer interested in Southeast Asia, that they (Hanoi) were now pro-Chinese, and might insist on a 14-nation Geneva Conference. Stevenson indicated that he would explore the possibility of Rangoon as site for talks. Secretary said for time being it "makes sense for U Thant to keep this (matter) in his own hand for the moment." Rusk said he wouldn't mind asking Dobrynin "quite frankly about it". (Rusk-Stevenson Telcon, Nov.26/64)

U Thant states he was asked by Stevenson in latter part November (January, according to SYG's statement to Ball on Dec.7/65) about possible venue and level of representation. He and Stevenson agreed Rangoon was preferred meeting place. SYG immediately queried Ne Win and got affirmative reply. He informed Stevenson, and suggested, for secrecy's sake, US Ambassador Rangoon and DRVN Consul General Rangoon as representatives. Stevenson enthusiastic. (Yost-SYG memcon Nov.19/65)

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December U Thant ill and convalescing for three weeks beginning Dec. 2. (Yost-SYG memcon Nov. 19/65)

Late Dec. U Thant asked Stevenson about U.S. response and was told it was being given "serious consideration". Following this conversation, Stevenson called the Secretary to say that he had given nothing to U Thant beyond the statement that we were giving this proposal serious consideration. (Ball-Yost Telcon, Nov. 17/65 - 9:15 am)

Thant told Plimpton (Plimpton-SYG memcon Feb.13/65) that his "last talk" with Stevenson occurred Dec. 28; he told Ball (Ball-SYG memcon Dec.7/65) that he spoke to Stevenson in late December, and was told "no reply" received.

January SYG returned from Jamaica (in December?) and met with Stevenson on Jan. 11 or 12. They discussed possible venues and levels of representation, and agreed on Rangoon and Ambassadors. U Thant promptly queried Rangoon and got affirmative reply from Ne Win on Jan. 16. (Ball-U Thant memcon Dec. 7/65)

Thant asserted to Yost that he did not discuss subject again with Stevenson until January, and that Stevenson said Washington would find it difficult to negotiate without South Viet-Nam and because of shakiness of South Viet-Nam

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Government (Yost-SYG memcon Nov. 19/65; Plimpton-SYG memcon Feb. 13/65).

According SYG's latest account, this conversation took place Jan. 29 or 30 and he transmitted reply to Hanoi at end of January (Ball-SYG memcon Dec. 7/65).

Stevenson later told Cleveland that the answer from Washington was always: "There may be a time...but not now." (Stevenson-Cleveland Telcon, Feb. 13/65). Secretary Rusk's recollection was that it was one of those things he talked over with Stevenson along with others and because (at the time they were getting messages from various intermediaries) it did not have mark of seriousness, he was very much afraid it was a move to embarrass us with Saigon and there was doubt of anything substantive. We did not reject it--we simply did not indicate that we wanted to go ahead at that time but put it on shelf for consideration for future. (Rusk-Ball Telcon, Nov. 17/65)

Feb. 12, 1965 U Thant told Plimpton and Yost he was still waiting to hear the U.S. response. (Stevenson-U Thant memcon, Feb. 16/65) (Plimpton-SYG memcon Feb.13/65)

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February 21, 1965

Richard Rotton, Washington correspondent of the Los Angeles Times, published a story headed "Thant Sends Peace Plan to LBJ", subheaded "Stevenson is Likely Intermediary."

February 24, 1965

U Thant held press conference in which he said that he has been conducting discussions with "the parties concerned" in the Viet Nam crisis over the past two years, and implied that full story about Viet Nam had been withheld from the American people.

Later That Day

In discussion with U Thant, the Secretary said that he was aware of U Thant's "proposals" but they were just procedural and did not deal with substantive questions or give any indications that the talks would lead to agreement or be fruitful. U Thant said again that he had had no response from Stevenson on his "proposal". (Rusk-U Thant Telcon, February 24, 1965.)

February 25, 1965

Secretary Rusk in a press conference said that over the past two years we have been talking with the Secretary General and others about Viet Nam; that until now all proposals had been

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"procedural"; and that there was no indication that Hanoi was prepared to cease aggression against South Viet Nam.

February 27, 1965 — Stevenson told U Thant that despite existence of several channels of communication, there has been no indication that Hanoi is willing to cease its attempts to take over South Viet Nam. (USUN 3426, February 27, 1965.)

March 10, 1965 — The spokesman for the Secretary General said that Ambassador Stevenson on February 27, 1965, had conveyed the official U.S. reaction to the Secretary General's "proposal" at that stage.

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